



## **HB 408 Statewide Targeted Overdose Prevention (STOP) Act of 2022**

**Committee: Health and Government Operations**

**Date: February 16, 2022**

**POSITION: Support with amendments**

**The Maryland Coalition of Families:** Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) helps families who care for a loved one with behavioral health needs. Using personal experience, our staff provide one-to-one peer support and navigation services to family members with a child, youth or adult with a mental health, substance use or gambling issue.

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MCF strongly supports HB 408.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has severely negatively impacted Maryland's opioid overdose crisis. Data shows that fatal overdoses by opioids increased during the first and second quarters of 2020 by 12% over the same period in 2019, and this increase was sustained in the first two quarters of 2021. People who have a substance use disorder have been especially hard hit by the pandemic – isolation, the disruption of support systems, and the restrictions in access to treatment have all contributed to increases in substance use and relapse. And even before COVID-19, Maryland was in the midst of an opioid epidemic.

While recent increases in opioid overdose deaths is a national problem, Maryland ranked #7 in highest overdose death rates in the country between April 2020 and April 2021, with an estimated 2,876 overdose deaths. Black Marylanders have experienced substantial and disproportionate increases in fatal overdoses.

For this reason, Maryland must enact strong measures to reduce the number of opioid overdose deaths. HB 408 is one such measure. The wide distribution of free naloxone kits is a key, cost-effective strategy to reduce the number of opioid overdose deaths. The proposed amendments to the bill will make it stronger by increasing the numbers of naloxone kits available to be offered at no cost.

Therefore we urge a favorable report on HB 408.

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